

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 30 having been indicated as allowable, Claims 31, 32 and 33 are now presented for examination. Claims 31, 32 and 33 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention, in terms which distinguish over the art of record. Claims 31, 32 and 33 are the only independent claims under consideration.

Claims 31-33 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,342,942 (Uzawa). With regard to these claims as currently amended, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent Claim 31 as currently amended is directed to a method in which a first process is to be performed to plural shots on a substrate consecutively and a second process is to be performed to plural shots on the substrate consecutively. The first process is to be performed before the second process and at least the first process is a sample process. According to the method, the order in which at least one of the first and second processes is to be performed to the plural shots is determined based on the distance between two shots to be processed consecutively by the first and second processes, respectively.

Independent Claim 32 as currently amended is directed to a device manufacturing method in which a first process that is a sample process is performed to plural shots on a substrate consecutively and a second process is performed to the plural shots on the substrate consecutively. The order in which at least one of the first and second processes is to be performed to the plural shots is determined based on a distance between two shots to be processed consecutively by the first and second shots, respectively.

Independent Claim 33 as currently amended is directed to a device manufacturing apparatus in which a first process unit that performs a sample process performs a first process to plural shots on a substrate consecutively. A second process unit performs a second process to plural shots on the substrate consecutively after the first process unit performs the first process. A determining unit determines the order in which at least one of the first and second processes is performed based on the distance between the shots to be processed consecutively by the first and second processes.

In Applicant's view, Uzawa discloses exposure apparatus that has a reticle stage for holding a reticle and a wafer stage for holding a wafer. A projection optical system projects a pattern of the reticle onto the wafer. The apparatus performs exposure by scanning both the reticle stage and the wafer stage with respect to the projection optical system, thereby transferring the pattern of the reticle onto a plurality of shot regions on the wafer in order. A plurality of shot regions arranged in a scanning direction on the wafer are intermittently exposed in order by scanning by moving the wafer stage without stopping it and skipping one or more shot regions without exposing them. In this skip period, the reticle stage is returned in the opposite direction to the direction of the scanning.

According to the invention defined in Claims 31, 32 and 33 as currently amended, the first of first and second processes performed to plural shots on a substrate consecutively is a sample shot process (e.g., pre-alignment, global tilting or global alignment) and the order of performing at least one of the first and second processes to the plural shots is determined based on the distance between two shots processed consecutively by the first and second processes.

Uzawa may teach utilizing a first exposure process for plural shots in which every other shot on a substrate is skipped and a second exposure process for plural shots in which the skipped shots are then exposed. The Uzawa disclosure, however, is devoid of any suggestion of the first process being a sample process or the first sample process being performed before the second process as in Claims 31, 32 and 33.

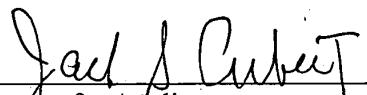
It is a further feature of Claims 31, 32 and 33 that the order in which at least one of the first and second processes performed to the plural shots consecutively is determined based on the distance between two shots to be processed consecutively by the first and second processes. Uzawa is restricted to determining the order of performing plural shots based on the distance between two shots of the same process (i.e, skipping a shot between successive exposure shots) but fails in any manner to suggest determining the order of performing shots based on the distance between a shot of a first process and a shot of the second process as in Claims 31, 32 and 33. Accordingly, it is not seen that Uzawa's determination of shot order based on distances among shots of one process could possibly teach or suggest the feature of Claims 31, 32 and 33 of basing the order of plural shots of a process on the distance between a shot of the process and a shot of a next process. In at least the foregoing respects, It is believed that Claims 31, 32 and 33 as currently amended are completely distinguished from Uzawa and are allowable.

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as references against the independent claims 31, 32 and 33. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's attorney, Steven E. Warner, may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Attorney for Applicant  
Jack S. Cubert  
Registration No. 24,245

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, New York 10112-3800  
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200  
SEW/JSC/dc

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